Florida State Farm
Raiford

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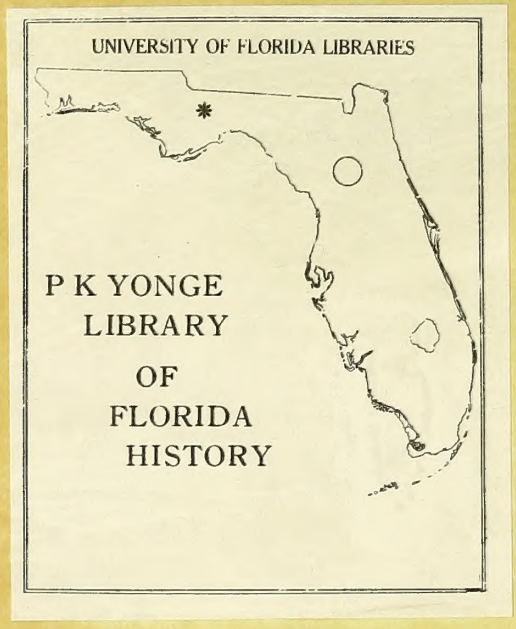
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FLORIDA STATE FARM,

Raiford, Florida.

At a Constitutional convention held in 1885 the framers of the Constitution of Florida imposed certain duties upon the Commissioner of Agriculture, among them, charge of the State Prison. In 1911 however, the Prison Bureau was made a separate department and a full time clerk placed in charge.

It was not until 1913 that the State began a real prison system; though on a small scale at that time, it has steadily grown until now it is one of the foremost systems of the South, both as to efficiency in management and morale of penal institutions.

In 1913 the State purchased a large tract of land in Bradford County, amounting to approximately 18,000 acres of land, and began the construction and development of the present institution. The size of the institution and the number of prisoners has continued to increase until now there is a total of 3,200 inmates in the entire prison system, with 1,580 being located at Raiford. The balance is distributed among the various road camps and other institutions of the State.

The present Superintendent, L. F. Chapman, came to Raiford in 1931. Mr. Chapman was born in Phoenix, Arizona, the son of a Methodist minister, and reared in the west. He later moved to Texas, where he spent much of his early life. He entered Southwestern University of that state, receiving his Bachelor's Degree. He next entered the Graduate School of Vanderbilt University and received his Master of Arts Degree, distinguishing himself in student activities and scholarship. In 1910 Mr. Chapman came to Florida, where he engaged in newspaper work and the citrus industry for a number of years. In 1931 he was a member of the State Legislature from Volusia County.

In 1931 the State Board of Commissioners of State Institutions selected Mr.

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Chapman to fill the position of Business Manager and Assistant Superintendent. In this position he rendered most valuable service to the then incumbent superintendent Mr. Blitch and the people of the State. Immediately upon the death of Mr. Blitch, the Board elected him to the position of Superintendent.

Then began the brightest and most progressive period in the history of the prison. Having served in the Florida Legislature, Mr. Chapman was familiar with many of the problems facing the people, and having been a successful business man, is able to conduct the affairs of the institution on a sound financial basis. Being a man of high intellectual achievements and a student of human nature, he is making a great contribution in the field of prison administration. It has been through his wise leadership and progressive program that this institution is today the outstanding state prison of the southeastern states.

It must be remembered that the Florida State Farm is a prison, the main part of the state's prison system. Here are found men and women who have been declared by the courts of the state, to be felons and sent here for safekeeping. The first duty of every official and guard of the prison is to see that those committed, are kept here, every other phase of the work including; segregation, employment, classification, treatment, hospitalization, etc., must of necessity be second. It is within this latter scope that the best work has been accomplished.

Within the last two years a well defined program for receiving new prisoners has been developed; briefly outlined it is as follows:

On arrival at the prison the Identification Officer receives the commitment papers and assigns to each prisoner a serial number which he or she is required to learn, also prison uniforms after which the new inmate is photographed and fingerprinted.

Immediately following this interview with the Identification Officer and before making contact with the prison population, the prisoner goes to the Record Office where a complete list of all relatives and friends is made in addition to other references. At this time the names of relatives and friends with whom he or she wishes to correspond are noted. These lists are approved and sent to the jail Postoffice. Prisoners are then sent to the segregation building, or quarantine, and held there until the following Monday.

On Monday, each new prisoner, received during the previous week, is given a thorough physical examination, and all defects are noted on the initial examination report; the different vaccines are administered, blood tests and urinalysis are made. On the basis of these findings the Institution Physician grades as to physical fitness for work.

On Tuesday all new men are again interviewed by the Identification Department. Clerks of the Court of each County send with their prisoners, commitment and indictment papers giving full information of the prisoner's case. These papers receive a number which is the prisoner's serial number and are recorded on a ledger, then copied on five fingerprint cards, which include a photograph and full description of the prisoner such as height, weight, general features, marks, scars, etc.

Commitment and indictment papers also one fingerprint card are sent to the Prison Division, in Tallahassee. One fingerprint card goes to the Florida State Bureau of Criminal Identification in Jacksonville, another to the U. S. Department of Justice in Washington, D. C. and two to the Record Office of this institution. Fingerprints are classified and filed by the Henry filing system, which includes index cards filed numerically and alphabetically.

The prisoner on Wednesday is interviewed by an assistant in the Record Office. One of the most interesting and valuable of all records maintained by

this office, is the "Initial Interview sheet," which covers a wide field in condensed form, giving the interviewer very definite and yet simple means for obtaining necessary information regarding any present or former inmates of the institution.

This form is divided into three parts, the first covering the legal data or information relative to the subject's trial and convictions; the second, a family marital state, brief summary of past life and personal history and the third presenting names and addresses of individuals given as references. The Initial Interview Sheet is a stable form, and remains intact except for one section which is given over to all work and cell assignments.

Another assistant in the Record Office conducts what is known as the Social Service Interview. This phase of the institution's activities includes a case study of each inmate received, in which particular emphasis and thought is placed upon a thorough survey of parental background, personal development, history of school progress, practical knowledge, general information, and economic efficiency. With this information officials know a very important part of the subject's life and can understand his or her difficulties and possibilities far better than otherwise. From this survey a fairly clear picture of social relationships and a better knowledge of attitudes of inmate's home folks, cronies, shop-mates, political associates and church associates is gathered. The report for each case is based upon the Initial Social Interview and whatever information can be gathered from outside sources, including reports received in response to questionaires mailed out to parents, relatives, friends, former employers, and various social agencies. From the information collected is drawn a discriptive mental picture with words of each inmate received to be used in plans for rehabilitation, immunization, classification and work. This unit also serves the inmates in financial, family and personal problems.

The Director of Labor interviews each new prisoner with reference to previous

work experience and to determine the kind of work the prisoner can best do. Immediately following, the Superintendent interviews the new prisoners, during which time he explains the purpose of the prison, it's general operation and what is expected of each inmate. This serves as a general introduction to the institution.

On Friday the prisoner is questioned by the Chaplain & Educational Director, who secures a brief religious history of the individual. Here the religious program is explained and the prisoner encouraged to attend and take advantage of its benefits. At the same time the Educational Program is explained, the educational needs of the prisoner freely discussed and plans made. As a part of the same procedure the men are given various intelligence and achievement tests to determine their general qualifications for work and needs for an educational program.

In the summer of 1932 the Prison School was inaugurated, with classes meeting each Saturday from 1:00 to 5:00 P.M., for the benefit of those men who wished to enroll. In 1933 an advance was made by providing classes two afternoons a week from 1:00 to 5:00 P.M., and later expanded to three afternoons a week. Under this plan the inmates carry on with their regular employment, but arrangement was made to relieve them from work for the afternoon classes.

In 1935 the present Educational Program was organized. This calls for five and one-half days a week for the white prisoners, who are first offenders and whose institutional records indicate they are able to benefit from this educational program. The school day is from 7:45 A.M., to 4:00 P.M., and continues for a period of three months during which time the men are relieved from all work, but expected to devote entire time to their studies and classroom recitations. At the end of this term they return to work and three months later can return to school if they wish. To stay in school, the inmate must show aptitude and progress.

The men are enrolled in school through a well organized program of procedure. The intelligence test given each man entering the institution serves as the beginning point for each school applicant. Various other tests given include the Stanford Achievement Tests which greatly aid in classification. A thorough examination is made into the previous criminal and institutional record, family background, physical condition, age, previous school record, personal traits and plans for the future. No inmate is refused enrollment until a thorough investigation is made.

The Prison School comprises the first eight grades, with a great deal of emphasis placed on the lower grades. In this connection it may be stated that young, white, first offenders, with normal intelligence, but illiterate, are required to attend the illiterate classes, and here best results have been achieved. Some of these scholars, 18 to 25, who could not distinguish between A and Z, after a short time of study found themselves able to write home for the first time. A part of the Educational Program is the Commercial Department in which shorthand, typing, commercial law, Spanish, commercial arithmetic, business English, penmanship, cartooning, art and bookkeeping are taught. In order to take the above studies, students must show evidence of being properly prepared to benefit from the work.

As part of the Educational program, a library of 5,000 volumes helps to answer many needs. Fiction, history, mechanics, poetry, approximately forty daily and weekly newspapers and a dozen or more of the higher type magazines, provided for all prisoners of the Insitution, are regularly used in school. Most of the books on the library shelves have been received through donations of public spirited citizens and various libraries over the State. Publishers have been very generous in answer to appeals for complimentary subscriptions.

It is very hard to determine the value of education in dealing with the

problem of crime. However, a cursory survey of the various crimes committed, show a correlation between the types of crimes and the education of the prisoner in general. It is clearly evident that a man with a fair education is less likely to get into trouble than a man not so privileged. Yet it must be remembered that intelligence also aids in evading the law. There are few, if any, who would advocate education as a panacea for curing crime, but if rightly interpreted and applied it should reduce crime. On the basis of 944 cases (white men) in the Institution, it was found that the educational level was equal to about the fifth grade; the same study revealed that 7½% of these men were strictly illiterate while many others were border-line cases.

The visitor to this institution is impressed with the cleanliness and orderliness and the atmosphere of organization and dignity. They are cordially greeted at the main gate, and registered as visitors. Visits to Administrative Offices, Cashier's Office, Clinic, Identification, Record, Chaplain's, Labor Directors and Custodial Offices, the Main Building, Women's Ward, and Hospital are made.

In addition visitors see a modern laundry, up to date power plant, tag plant, shoe, shirt and furniture factories, modern kitchen and bakery, tanning plant, garage, canning plant and machine shop. The visitor will also be impressed by two new large steel and concrete buildings, one a modern hospital and the other the Women's Ward.

The prison population is made up of men and women from every walk of life. Professional men and day laborers, the industrious and shiftless, take their places in a prison system unique and characterized with pride and honor, 30,000 having been received there during the history of the Institution. Of this vast army of unfortunate victims less than three per cent died here. The great majority of former inmates has returned to society, and demonstrated the ability to fit into the social order. This is most gratifying when it is realized that for longer or shorter

periods they have been fed, clothed, doctored, guarded, told when to go to bed and when to arise.

The Florida State Prison Farm is located on 18,000 acres of land, 4,000 of which is in cultivation. The annual production is about 16,000 bushels of corn, 11,000 bushels of mixed vegetables, 302,000 pounds of hay, 13,000 pounds of pumpkins, 20,000 gallons of cane syrup, 8,000 watermellons, 105,000 pounds of pork fattened on peanuts, and 68,000 gallons of milk, besides many other items.

About 12,000 acres of the Farm is devoted to pasture and stock raising. There are about 1,000 head of range cattle, 151 dairy cattle, and about 725 heads of hogs. The dairy cattle consists of pure bred Guernsey and Jersey. The range cattle consists of Brahmin, Hereford, and Angus breeds. Range feed production for cattle has been improved by cutting out undergrowth and sowing carpet grass.

The main kitchen of the Institution is equipped with most modern equipment. There are six steam cookers with a capacity of 700 gallons; 8 navy standard coffee urns with a capacity of 20 gallons each, four oil ranges, and other fixtures. The bakery consists of two modern ovens, and the other necessary equipment costing approximately $20,000.00. The kitchen and dining rooms are kept scrupulously clean, and all cooks and waiters wear white caps and aprons. Periodic physical examinations are given everyone connected with the Culinary Department. Meals are served cafeteria style, permitting the men to make their own selection from the variety of food offered.

The Florida State Farm serves the public with the manufacturing of License Tags. Numerous visitors each week, accompanied by courteous attendants leave the plant feeling they have witnessed an interesting and educational performance.

The huge plant, with it's up-to-date and 100% safety devised machinery, is considered one of the best kept and cared for in the South. Here a cutter shears

the metal into proper size for tags and a press next embosses the words, symbols, and letters. The tag is then sent to the paint vats for a coat of paint, emerging on an electrical conveyor, to an electric oven to be baked, again going to the pressman for a contrasting color on the embossing and returned to a second oven for the finish bake process, then to the shipping department. The banner year for tags in the State of Florida, was 1936 with a production of over half a million, exceeding the output of 1933 by 100,000; of 1934 by about 80,000 and of 1935 by about 60,000.

One of the features of the Institution is the telephone system which has 167 phones connected. These are installed in the officials residences, offices, guard towers, and other strategic points about the Farm from one-half to seven miles distant. The telephone system is one of the greatest aids in the system of guarding. A daily average of 1,575 calls is made.

Light and power for the Institution are provided by a $250,000.00 power plant, which furnishes lights to the prison buildings and the residential district, power for the canning plant, tag plant, cold storage plant, saw-mill, shingle mill, machine shop, pumping water into the 370,000 gallon reservoir and many other places of power consumption. The power plant proper consists of three Diesel engines, two of 300 H.P., each, and one 625 H.P. The production of this plant is about 1,600,000 K.W., hours per year.

In July last year the Tobacco Factory was opened up for the purpose of processing tobacco for State use. The equipment is valued at $5,000.00 and has a daily capacity of 100 pounds. Three grades of tobacco, consisting of chewing, cut plug smoking, and granulated smoking tobacco are manufactured. Only first class tobaccos from the State of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina are used, and only the highest grades of ingredients are purchased.

By L. O. Sheffield,
Chaplain, Raiford, Florida.

Raiford Farm

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